1998-99 and 1999-2000, 17 retail outlets and 30 LPG distributorships were allotted in Andhra Pradesh and 13 retail outlets and 7 LPG distributorships were allotted in Himachal Pradesh.

In addition to the locations pending from previous Marketing Plans, 88 retail outlet dealerships and 124 LPG distributorships have been included in the Marketing Plans 1996-98 for Andhra Pradesh and 13 retail outlets dealerships and 26 LPG distributorships for Himachal Pradesh. Locations included in the Marketing Plan are advertised by the Oil Companies from time to time. Selection is made by the Dealer Selection Boards on merit through interview. It generally takes about 6-12 months for commissioning of the dealerships from the date of interview.

ONGC proposal to divest its stake in Mumbai High

4993. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether ONGC propose to divest a part of its stake in the Mumbai High oil exploration;

(b) if so, whether the ONGC has submitted a detailed report to Government in this regard; and

(c) if so, the extend to which the exploration of gas and oil from Mumbai High oil fields is likely to increase due to divesting a part of its stake?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) There is no proposal for Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) to divest its stakes in Mumbai High field.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

LPG Plant in Bellary District of Karnataka

4994. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is LPG plant of Bharat Petroleum or Indian Oil Corporation or Hindustan Corporation in Bellary district;

(b) the total requirement of LPG in Bellary district, per month;

(c) whether Bharat Petroleum has agreed to start some LPG plants in Karnataka;

(d) if so, the places where they propose to start; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken to set up an LPG plant in Bellary?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) At present, there is no LPG Bottling Plant in Bellary District.

(b) The total requirement of LPG of the registered consumers of Public Sector Oil Companies in Bellary District is about 600 MT per month.

(c) to (e) Under 9th Plan, two LPG Bottling plants have been planned at Bangalore and Dharwad in Karnataka by Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL). Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited has a plan to set up a 10 TMTPA bottling capacity plant at Bellary during 9th Plan and identification of suitable land for plant is in progress.

Adulteration of Diesel

4995. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether rampant adulteration of diesel has been reported; and

(b) if so the steps taken to reduce the price of different between kerosene and diesel to discourage adulteration of diesel?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) Government have received complaints regarding adulteration of diesel. Oil Marketing Companies carry our regular/surprise checks of retail outlets, to prevent various malpractices including adulteration. In addition, special drives are launched by the oil companies both on their own and also under direction of Government from time to time to check malpractices. To prevent adulteration various steps like blue dyeing of kerosene (Public Distribution System), furfural doping, filter paper test, stock reconciliation, checking of retail outlets by mobile laboratories, etc. are taken by oil companies.

(b) From 23.3.2000, Government have increased the ex storage point price of PDS kerosene from Rs. 2.00/ litre to 4.50/litre.

Methane Gas Reserves in Jharkhand

†4996. SHRI SHIBU SOREN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is huge reserve of coal bed methane gas in the coal areas of Hazaribagh and Dhanbad of Jharkhand region;

(b) if so, the details of this huge reserve according to the datas received so far;